USA Carry Guide to Dry Practice

Introduction

Due to the various requests I have received in regards to my article Sighted Fire vs. Reflexive Fire, I am providing this DIY guide to dry practice (a.k.a. "dry-firing") in order to answer some of the questions that are still lingering in regards to dry practice.

In this article I will attempt to give you some basic safety guidelines, and some ideas of how to both schedule and keep your scheduled routine from becoming too dull. Be forewarned; this is a long article (about 23 pages in Word). I have gone through these lengths not because I like to type, but because I would like to give you a deeper understanding of both the safety considerations, as well as the practical application proper dry practice.

I would like for you to keep in mind that everything in this article could be wrong. So approach it the way you should all firearms articles: Check it out for yourself, as it is you who has to learn for yourself. As humans, we learn by emulating (copying). As we experience more and learn more, we begin to transform our ideas and change them with little refinements here and there. Finally, after learning (copying) and tinkering enough, we begin to combine ideas to create new and interesting concepts, ideas, and techniques. Therefore feel free to copy, transform, and combine these ideas by mixing them with your own life experiences, creating a dry practice routine that works for you.

Disclaimer

I want to state up front that before you implement any of my suggestions, that you must assume *all* responsibility *and* liability for *all* of your actions. I can only give the best advice that I can, and I, like all humans am flawed.

There are risks we take every day, and there are very real risks associated with the use of firearms, and even firearms training aids (such as airsoft, laser training devices, and weighted training magazines in unloaded firearms). While those risks which are associated with practicing with firearms or even non-lethal training aids, can be minimized by proper use of the four firearm safety rules, the four safety habits, and the liberal application of commonsense - you should understand that it is impossible to eliminate all risks, and that inherent risks associated with the use of firearms and firearm training aids cannot be completely eliminated without jeopardizing the essential qualities and benefits of the firearms training, whether dry or live fire.

I would also like for you to understand that this article is meant to help you get the most out of your dry practice time, but it is not a guide on any type of firearms handling advice. There is no substitute for knowledge and understanding. Therefore if you are unsure about the safe and basic steps in safely handling a firearm (such as loading, unloading, and checking the condition of the firearm to know what condition the firearm is in), don't use the advice in this guide before you can get the correct training that you need in order to keep yourself and all innocents safe.

I can say with 100% certainty that if you follow our simple guidelines and procedures,

you too can safely benefit greatly from dry practice. If, for whatever reason, you skip any step that this article suggests, are not 100% cognizant of what you are doing, or violate the spirit of the following guidelines - I promise you that your risk of a Negligent Discharge (ND) and potentially injuring or killing an innocent person will greatly skyrocket. So either be 100% deliberate in your actions and be "all there" mentally, or don't attempt to dry practice.

Finally, I want you to understand that this article is *descriptive* in nature, not *prescriptive*. What I mean by this is that while I will describe training techniques and recommending training drills to you, it is up to your to use your intellect, previous experiences, and continued training to select the correct technique which best matches your unique situation. While I have a great deal of experience in the training field, I don't know it all (not even close). Because of this, there is no way that I can tell you in an article such as this, what you need to do, because there is no way that I can possibly know your personal situation. There is no "one size fits all" we may come close in certain circumstances, but even then, you will still need to tailor the advice to fit your current needs.

Therefore, I am not trying to prescribe a particular course of action for you, I am simply going give you some rough guidelines, and outline for you some things that I know I have found useful for myself and my clients, and I am going to then turn you loose on the information and ask you to apply it to your particular circumstances.

"*Most people have the will to win, few have the will to prepare to win.*"
- Bobby Knight

Introduction - What is Dry Practice?
Dry practice is a form of physical and mental rehearsal where one uses an unloaded firearm, a firearm training aid (such as airsoft or laser training devices), and/or weighted training magazines in order to correctly practice techniques and proper weapons manipulation for the purpose of programming your neurological system to move correctly, rapidly, and efficiently, along a pre-rehearsed path and ingrain these patterns into the unconscious mind.

The benefits such practice provides are the rapid assimilation of techniques into ones tactical arsenal, in a fraction of the time it would take a shooter of equal skills to achieve with live fire alone. Furthermore, if trained with under the stress of quality Reality Based Training or "RBT" program - those ingrained skills will be available even during periods of high stress - such as a gunfight.

Why Dry Practice?
In short, dry practice is the secret of warriors and champions the world over, as it gains you very real skills, all without the added expense of live fire.

Make no mistake, dry practice isn't just a training option for those who can't afford to visit the range regularly, as dry practice yields very real benefits that ***can't*** be achieved with live fire. Even if you have your own private range, you should still use dry practice in order to gain very real skills, as well as learn lessons that cannot be uncovered during live fire.

I can promise you from personal experience in training both myself and thousands of individuals that your live fire can only be as good as your dry practice. Without dry practice you are moving forward at a snail's pace compared to what you could achieve if you utilized the invaluable tool that dry practice is. If you are not dry practicing now, you are hobbling your firearms handling skills.

In my opinion, if you are serious about what you are doing, you owe it to yourself to establish a quality dry practice routine.

More Dry Practice Training Options
While each of the afore mentioned training aids (an unloaded firearm, a firearm training device, and/or weighted training magazines) has its inherent strengths as well as their own unique drawback and weakness - when properly combined, the above training tools allow you to consistently elevate your skills to a higher level without the inconvenience or more costly expense of live fire training.

Whether you are learning to shoot with combative sighted fire, reflexive sighted fire, or both, you need to put some quality practice time in behind your firearm. Quality time used to mean a lot of time and ammo at the range in order to verify your dry practice.

However, the great news is that you no longer need to go to a live fire range to get quality and realistic training that dry practice can't give you.

That's because today you have the option of both quality airsoft and laser emitting training devices that are manufactured out of polymers, steel, or a combination of polymer and steel. Both of these Non-Lethal Training Firearms or "NLTF" will give you trigger reset, and the airsoft will give you a reciprocating slide. These NLTF are a real boon to all of us who are serious about learning the skills needed to win the fight for our lives.

Today's airsoft guns have come a very long way from what they were just a few short years ago. The new models of airsoft look, feel, and function close enough to the real thing that they are a real training asset to those who are pressed to make the most out of their time and money, which holds true for most of us. As a matter of fact, I would still recommend these types of training aids to you even if you could afford to hit the range every day.

Why?

Because both forms of NLTF tame the recoil (with the laser training aids you will have no recoil at all) sufficiently to allow you to achieve a working understanding of your body mechanics during shooting - *without* the interference from recoil. This is important because you will be able to see with your own eyes what your body is doing the instant you press the trigger (which is where a vast majority of poor shooting habits occur).

With the airsoft you will get the trigger press that dry practice provides, a trigger reset, as well as the sending of rounds down range in the same manner you would during live fire, except with the airsoft you will be sending small plastic BB's down range rather than

metallic projectiles, and with the lasers you will only be shoot light down range.

Different types of airsoft are currently manufactured in semi-automatic blowback (reciprocating) via gas or battery power. They are manufactured as realistic looking and feeling handguns, revolvers, rifles, and shotguns. As a matter of fact, they mimic the real thing so closely, you can use them with all of your current equipment. Yes, that's right, you can use your tactical lights, holsters, slings, magazine pouches and even your optics. You would be surprised just how well the new NLTF replicate the real thing.

Furthermore they are inexpensive to shoot and will allow you to train to your hearts content in any private residence where the walls are not paper thin. Even the most expensive airsoft will pay for itself in a matter of months in what you will save in ammunition, gas, and range fees. In my opinion they are the perfect bridge to fully integrate your dry practice and live practice into one complete program. With this new technology, and a solid training program (dry, NLTF, and live) you can experience progress unlike anything our predecessors ever had the opportunity to acquire. Long live capitalism for giving us the opportunity to get to where we are today.

Does this mean that you should forsake your dry practice for the realism and convenience of NLTF? No, not at all. Again, just like any technique these types of practices all have their advantages as well as disadvantages.

Could you forgo the NLTF training altogether? Yes you can, but your progress will be slower without it, and if you substitute live fire for NLTF you will find that the expense in ammunition, driving time, range fees, targets, cleaning time and products, as well as the wear and tear on your gun would have been better invested in NLTF training.

Does this mean that you should now forego your live fire in lieu of NLTF range practice? No, of course not. But you can start cutting back dramatically because you will find that your dry practice will improve your gun handling skills, your NLTF range practice will improve your speed and accuracy with both unsighted and sighted fire out to about 15-yards, and you will then use your live fire training only to verify what your dry and NLTF has done for you. This concept really does turn the normal training regime on its head, and it's well worth it to do so in both due to the phenomenal results reaped.

First Step - Location selection

Much like establishing a storefront, you need to select your dry practice area with the most important factor in mind "location, location, location." A suitable location is paramount because we are looking for is an area that meets the following four criteria:

1. Is easy to control - What I mean by this is that the area you select for dry practice should not be a main avenue for people to walk through. Once you are in your dry practice area, the last thing you need is constant interruption, so make sure this area is somewhat secluded, and people can't simply walk in on you, especially not in the down range direction where you will be pointing your unloaded firearm, high power lasers, or airsoft NLTF.
    a. If you are using airsoft NLTF it is paramount that you control the area and that both you and anyone else present wear the proper safety equipment

(such as eye protection) in case of ricochet.

2. Can be segregated - Ensure that the area you select is an area that is free of accidental contamination by live rounds being introduced (your reloading room is NOT the place to set up your dry practice area).
3. Is bullet proof - Ensure that your down range area, and where you will hang your targets, is capable of either stopping a live round (projectile) or where, once the round escapes, it will travel in a direction where it will not cause harm by striking an innocent person (remember that fourth firearms safety habit).
    a. Note that most modern firearms ammunition will NOT be contained by standard building materials such as steel or wood studs, sheetrock, and siding. Most modern firearms ammunition will easily defeat even several layers/walls and still retain sufficient power to kill or maim. Therefore you will need to find a brick wall (such as a fireplace or chimney) or a basement wall that is ideally both concrete and backed by earth on the opposite side of the wall.
    b. Also be aware that airsoft NLTF can loge in dry wall and, depending on the quality of the airsoft NLTF, velocity, and weight of projectile being shot, those little rounds can penetrate both thin drywall and wood veneers causing damage to property with possible injury to bystanders. If you have any doubt of your structures ability to stop a projectile safely, consult a reputable structural engineer in your area.
    c. Take note that the harder matrixes' (such as wood, concrete, or brick) pose a significant ricochet hazard as well. Therefore you will need to wear safety glasses.
4. Is exclusive - Once you have designated your safe and sanitized dry practice area, ONLY dry practice in that designated area, and nowhere else.

Safety Rituals - Train safely, or don't train at all

The next topic I would like to touch on are the safety rituals that you need to conduct prior to EACH and every practice session. For your convenience, we have included a two-page checklist at the end of this article that you can print off and use *prior to each* practice session.

Checklists are invaluable, all manner of professional (Marines, soldiers, sailors, pilots, astronauts) use them, this should tell you something.

1. Once you have entered your established dry practice area, and before you begin your dry practice session:
    a. Face in a safe direction and unload your firearm correctly.
    b. Place any loose rounds and any filled magazines into your designated live fire range bag.
    c. Check your ammunition carriers (magazine pouches etc.,) and ensure there is no live ammunition in them, if you find live ammunition place it in your designate live fire range bag.
    d. Check yourself - your pockets and any other place on your body that you might place ammunition, if you find live ammunition place it in your designate live fire range bag.
    e. Thoroughly inspect and sanitize your dry practice area, ensuring that there are no live rounds that could accidentally be picked up and inadvertently

introduced.

i. In this sanitization sweep you are looking for any loose ammunition that could be lying around or unintentionally stored and accessed during your dry practice session. If you find any, place it in your designated live fire range bag.

f. Once you have sanitized yourself and your dry practice area, place your designated live fire range bag, - and all live ammunition - in a safe and secure area that neither you nor any unauthorized personnel can access it until the time you want to retrieve it (after dry practice is completed).

2. Once you have removed your live fire range bag and stored it elsewhere, you can now retrieve and open your dry practice range bag.
   a. If you currently own a single range bag for your live fire equipment - purchase a second of a different color, for your dry practice equipment. Ensure that you keep your live fire range bag and your dry practice equipment in a separate bag or container. If you don't currently own a range bag, I would advise you to purchase two, each of a different color. Then strictly segregate your live fire range bag from your dry practice equipment and tools.
3. You can now begin your dry practice session with a proper Chamber Check and Magazine Check to ensure that you are indeed unloaded.

Be "All There"

If you are in fact in a sanitized area, have followed the above guidelines and feel that you are physically ready to start your dry practice - you must be mentally ready as well. You must be "all there." What I mean by this is that you need to be fully cognizant of not only your goals, but why you are practicing to begin with.

While I will not cover managing your mind and training goals in this article, I would highly recommend getting a copy of Lanny Bassham's *With Winning in Mind* for yourself, and then working your way through the steps of setting your goals and prioritizing your schedule accordingly.

1. Wherever and whenever you choose to conduct your dry practice, be "all there." Never allow your mind to wander from the task at hand. If your mind is wandering, immediately stop your dry practice.
   a. Avoid all the distractions you can, so plan ahead and let others know that your training time is sacrosanct to you.
      i. If you do experience any distraction, such as a phone call, a knock at the door, or other interruptions, IMMEDIATELY stop your dry practice and deal with the issue to the point that you can mentally get back into your dry practice (don't bring your issues back to practice with you), if you can't - wrap your dry practice session up and shut it down.
      ii. If you decide to continue your dry practice session after an interruption, you must return to dry practice check sheet (see the above section or the checklist at the end of the article) and proceed through all of the sequential steps required to safely dry practice.
      iii. Treat every dry practice session with all seriousness with a goal and plan in mind. Furthermore, treat every dry practice session with the same seriousness you would approach a live fire drill, this means that

you should adhere to the Four Firearms Safety Habits *all* of the time.

- The Four Safety Habits

1. Keep my finger straight and off the trigger until I'm intentionally firing
2. Control and know where the muzzle is pointing
3. Know the condition of the firearm
4. Be sure of my target and my environment

Now follow your training plan and goals, be "all there" and put deliberate effort into your dry practice session.

"Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect."
-Vince Lombardi

Deliberate Practice vs. Practice

A common observation is that it takes approximately 10,000 hours of repetitions of deliberate practice of a given technique to make it reflexively ingrained into the subconscious, and about 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to become a master in a given field. Now before you go into convulsions over that number, understand that if you do the simple math on this, the 10,000 repetitions would break down to about 38 repetitions of deliberate practice per day for a year (if you are practicing no more than 5 days a week).

I would add that those 38 repetitions of deliberate practice per day would necessarily be 38 proper repetitions of dry practice. What I mean by that, is that I believe that the 38 repetitions of deliberate practice is not sufficient, it must be 38 repetitions of deliberate practice, where you have achieved 38 proper repetition of deliberate practice. So even if you are consciously aware and deliberately practicing, you shouldn't count the number of fumbled attempts as proper deliberate practice, only the proper ones make a repetition.

The key to the concept of deliberate practice is to practice slowly enough that you do not fumble or make any mistakes. Go only as quickly as you can practice perfectly. With perfect practice will come smooth motion, and speed will come as a byproduct naturally.

The good news for you is that by using the training techniques mentioned herein (including Lanny Basshams Mental Management System), you can literally double and triple the training benefits without increasing the time typically needed for the average person who does not have the aid of these tools in achieving their goals.

Finally for this subject, you are looking to balance quality training *with* quantity. It is vital that you do not think that the volume of repetitions is the key to success; it is not. It is the balancing of quality of training over a given time that will help you reach your goals in the shortest time. Never let your quality degrade due to increased volume. If you are training like an endurance athlete, pushing to the extent that you find yourself mentally daydreaming, you either need to rein yourself in mentally or you need to stop for the day, as the training value is nil and you are becoming a safety hazard waiting to happen.

What Training Device Should You Dry Practice With?
This is really up to you. I don't say that as an easy way out, I say that because your dry practice should fit your needs for where you are right now. I could be rigid and formalistic, but to no avail, because only you will truly know what you should be tuning up.

For instance, if you know you are having problems with a good smooth and fast presentation, you should dedicate about 2/3rd's of your time to simply work on your presentations, and forget malfunction clearances (if you already feel comfortable with them) until the last 1/3rd of your training time.

However, if you feel that you are proficient with the presentation, yet you feel the actual trigger press is what you need to fine tune, you can either work with a unloaded firearm, or a quality airsoft NLTF. This will get you close to your actual firearms weight and if it's a quality airsoft NLTF then it will also give you a good trigger press, with a little recoil, semi-automatic (or automatic for that matter), feeding, trigger reset, etc., and it will also give you that valuable feedback for both your sighted combative fire and your reflexive combative fire.

There really is no limit to how beneficial your dry practice can be for you, it is extremely flexible and versatile. For instance if you feel comfortable with most of your firearms handling skills, you could incorporate the shooting and moving to cover with appropriate scan and assessing while behind cover/concealment. I have, in the past, used a mirror behind a thicker sheet of plastic on which a target is mounted with an adhesive hanger. This has allowed me to see what my pieing from behind cover looks like from your adversaries view. Another even better aid, is setting up a small inexpensive video recorder just below or above your airsoft target and turning this on to watch and analyze your movement and cover techniques after the dry practice.

Whatever you plan to practice, start slowly, because slow, accurate, and deliberate movements will lead you to become smooth, and once you become smooth, sped will naturally come.

How slowly should you practice? Slow enough that you make no mistakes. If you are fumbling around, back off the speed about 1/3 of what you are currently pushing and try again. If you find yourself still fumbling, back off 1/3 again... and so forth and so on, until you can practice perfectly without fumbling.

I would recommend that you practice with your airsoft NLTF using your eye protection in your designated dry practice area, using the exact same safety rules and procedures that you do for all of your dry practice, because, as I mention above, you get all the benefits of live fire (seeing the results downrange and semi-automatic fire, without the artificiality of having to reset the trigger manually) without any of the noise or expenses.

For the final third of your dry practice (the last 5 to 10 minutes), I would recommend that you once again practice with your unloaded carry firearm with weighted safety dry practice magazines inserted, as this method leaves your weapon's actual trigger weight and feel firmly engraved in your subconscious before you carry. Again, there is no magic formula, you know yourself better than anyone.

Next comes the subject of speed. At this point I have recommended that you go slow, and practice no faster than you can practice perfectly, and I stick by this. However, at some point you really need to know how fast you really are. To know how fast you really are, you will need a shot timer. Us it as a metronome to begin with. Allow the occasional use of the shot timer to let you know just how effective your training program is.

Eventually, with the slow and deliberate practice, speed will naturally come. Once you have perfected your form and techniques, it is important that you then add the shot timer more often to keep you on pace. Stop using it if you feel yourself fumbling. Back off and slow down.

Ground Rules

With the idea that proper practice is a means to achieve our goal of weapons handling mastery, let's set the ground rules:

1. When dry practicing you should set a reasonable time limit for each session. Practice no less than 15 minutes a day and no more than 30 minutes per weapons system. Practicing fifteen minutes five times a week is much better than two and a half hours practice secession once a week.
    a. The ratio of dry practice to live fire should be about 4 to 1. Therefore, if you plan on a half hours worth of live fire per weapons systems on Friday, you should dry practice for about a half an hour per weapons system Monday through Thursday.
2. In order to benefit fully from your dry practice, practice no less than 4 days per week and no more than 6 days per week.
    a. You need time off, and you don't want to burn yourself out on your dry practice, so I recommend that you start with 15 minutes a day per weapons system for the first quarter (three months), as this is an easy goal and after 90 days you will have established a habit that can last a lifetime.
        i. Keep in mind that the above time recommendations are simply a starting point. Play with less time and more time, *keep a practice journal* (again, see Lanny Bassham's book) so you can confirm what works best for you.
        ii. I highly advise that you stick to a short and simple routine as described above for the initial 90 days of your training. If you can keep it simple and maintain the routine for 90 days, you will be able to establish a lifetime habit.
3. Remember that only proper practice makes perfect. Do not dry-practice if you cannot be "all there" mentally. If you practice half-heartedly you will defeat the purpose of dry practice and not get the benefits of training; thereby missing your training goals while wasting valuable training time.
    a. Never practice faster than you can perfectly perform the task properly.
4. The only thing that should be missing from your dry-practice sessions is ammunition. Everything else must remain the same (wear all of your equipment that you will be wearing in real life). If you are a police officer, wear the gear you will wear on duty, if you are a CCW holder wear the same type of clothing and holster you will wear when carrying.
5. Just as when you are training on a live fire range, keep a positive attitude and focus on what you do correctly; no negative talk allowed.

6. If there is a technique that you do not understand or do not remember, do not practice the technique, as you will be teaching yourself how to do something wrong.
    a. If you are unsure, seek proper training.
7. Never practice to mental or physical exhaustion, and never practice failure.

When Should You Dry Practice?
At a minimum, you should perform proper and deliberate dry-practice for at least fifteen minutes before you intend to carry a firearm.

- For the policeman, this would be before you leave for the station to go on shift
- For the citizen, this would be before you leave your home
- For the soldier, this will be any time you can get it without ignoring your mission

I know that for those of you in the military, especially for those who are single and in bachelors quarters this is highly unlikely to happen because of the fact that you are not trusted with firearms while in garrison. So unless you live off base, you are kind of screwed. If it is at all feasible get married (joking), or move out into town with some buddies (not joking) and reclaim some amount of personal liberty. If you are deployed to a combat zone and you are not S.F.... make friends in the S.F.

If any of the above suggestions are truly not options for you, then see if you can arrange for your unit to set up a secure dry practice are. This may be difficult, but it is worth a shot, because most units do have a designated “snapping in” area at the battalion level for regular qualifications courses, so it’s not entirely unprecedented.

In the worst-case scenario use your dry practice guides and find a nice quiet place to accurately pantomime your weapons manipulations while you vividly visualize the actions. I know that this sounds silly, but it has been proven that vivid visualization with 100% focus on 100% correct techniques will gain greater results than no practice at all or sloppy practice. As a matter of fact, Lanny Bassham attributes one of his world record performances to such training when he was deprived live fire training for a number of years during his time in the military.

So What Should You Practice?
You should practice those skills you know you need to work on, as well as those skills you have already mastered. I am not trying to be evasive nor cute when I tell you that you are your own best advisor in this matter. You know your strengths and shortcomings better than anyone else.

When practicing, work for either 10 or 20 minutes on those areas that you know you need to work on, and then finish the practice session with either 5 or 10 minutes of quality practice time reviewing and practicing those skills you are already proficient in. This will structure your training time in a manner that will give you about 2/3rd’s of the training time shoring up any deficiencies, while brushing up on the skills you already have mastered with the last 1/3rd, and finishing your practice session on a high note.

Don’t get stuck repeating the same routine over and over. If you are weak in one area,

practice that for perhaps 5 - 10 minutes, and then move forward with another area that needs shoring up. Similarly, if you are strong in one area, don't keep practicing that skill to the detriment of others. So spread your attention around, keep prodding and poking to find what needs help.

Skills to dry-practice:

- Voice commands with hand and arm signals: "Stop!" "Stop! What do you want?!" "Let me see your hands!" "Stop or I'll shoot!" etc.
- Your presentations and draws from the type of carry you will be using in real life (sling, holster, transitions, etc.,)
- Both your combative and reflexive fire
    - Practice shooting with both eyes open
- Ambidextrous shooting (get used to using both sides of the body to shoot with)
- Three types of presentations for handguns
    - From the holster, ready, weapons retention, high ready, and close contact
- Three types of presentations for rifle and shotgun
    - Ready, high ready, and field ready
- Your basic gun handling drills
    - Reloads
        - Tactical, speed, and empty gun
    - Malfunction clearances
        - Immediate and remedial action (Type-1-3 with the shotgun)
- Practice the above gun handling skills with both the firing hand only and the support hand only
- Your movement techniques
    - Both slow stalking and rapid approach
    - Forward, backwards, laterally and oblique.
    - Practice your different positions
        - Standing, squatting, kneeling, sitting, prone, roll-over/urban prone, supine, and supine urban
- Getting to cover safely (maintaining muzzle control), and utilizing the cover correctly
- Utilize your tactical lights
    - Master turning them on and off, when you want them
- Utilize your contact drills every time you present to challenge or dry practice

Practice only those things you know you can perform correctly. If you practice something you don't remember well you will run the risk of practicing something incorrectly, and you will later have to unlearn the bad technique and then re-learn it properly, therefore wasting your precious training time.

Keep a detailed journal of what you are doing with both your dry practice as well as your live fire. After all, as Lord Kelvin once famously said ""*To measure is to know.*" and "*If you can not measure it, you can not improve it.*" This is certainly the case with proper practice for any firearms training program.

In closing the above section, I would once again remind you of two things:

- I would encourage you (again) to read Lanny Bassham's book *With Winning in Mind*

in order to get a good idea of what a good training attitude and habits consists of, and help you outline a good solid schedule as well as provide you additional training tools. It is a short inexpensive book that will give you much in return. A solid understanding of Mental Management will gain you much.

- Next I would once again like to put practice in perspective. What you are practicing in your dry practice and live fire focuses on physical skills and mental attitudes. Yet in order to master a life or death situations you must apply these skills and attitudes in quality RBT scenarios where these be tempered by the friction of realistically simulated battle… if you want them available to you under the stress of a fight for life.

Example Routines

Again, let me state upfront that what I am about to suggest is only a broad brush stroke, it is intended as a general guide in that it is simply descriptive and not prescriptive in nature. Once again, you will be the best judge of exactly how to fill in the blanks.

What I am going to lay out is an example of a simple one month plan, a plan that can be modified when needed, and give you a couple of different ideas of how to vary your routine in the process. I will pretend you are a new shooter and lay out a basic plan for you, but feel free to adapt it and make it your own and modify it to fit your needs.

This plan is designed to be flexible and can change as your situation changes. Therefore if you are at a sticking point you can bypass and move to something else, or you can continue to chip away at the area that requires your focused attention. Regardless, vary your routine to try to hit all of your skills in a month, in order to keep the sessions somewhat new and interesting.

As I mentioned previously, we are looking at between 15 and 30 minutes on a particular system, no more nor any less.

One way you can vary your routine is to set up a number of basic routines that you can print on a 3x5 card. These basic routines could be built around any skill set. For instance you could work on your presentations, and then work on your presentations from the different positions. You could work on your malfunction clearances, and you could then work on one handed malfunction clearances, and then one handed malfunction clearances support hand only. The list and variations are almost endless.

For instance, I may begin one card as follows:

1. 5 minutes of *wall drills* from the ready - finish each with contact drills or “CD’s”
2. 5 minutes of wall drills from the weapons retention position, finish with CD’s
3. 5 minutes of wall drills from the holster, finish with CD’s

I would have many 3x5 cars like this made up for those areas that I know I would like to maintain my proficiency in. Notice that I finish the dry practice in 15 minutes (as we recommend for beginners).

Another card may read as follows:

1. 5 minutes of immediate action drills, support hand only or “SHO”, finish with CD’s
2. 5 minutes of immediate action drills, firing side hand only (FSHO), finish with CD’s
3. 5 minutes of immediate action drills, (no abbreviations means both hands), finish with CD’s

In this case I have outlined a card with skills that I know I need to strengthen. Notice that I am progressing from difficult, to easier, finishing on a high note of a skill I already know. I suggest you do the same.

Once you have your cards made up, you can mix and shuffle; depending on the amount of time you choose to devote to that day’s practice.

Next, let’s take a look at how to set up a 5 day schedule. This schedule leaves you days off, and allows you to make up days on your weekends if you miss a day during the week. The way I have the schedule broken down has 6 different drills, this is for those who will be dry practicing for 30 minutes. Again, I advise for only 15 to begin with, but I realize that there are over achievers out there, as those who already have advanced skills and are going to practice more than 15 minutes regardless of what I recommend.

Unless otherwise indicated those drills with a “3/4 speed” direction, all of these drills are meant to be performed slowly (explained previously). If at any time you begin fumbling, slow down to a speed where you can perform flawlessly. Only replace the standard “slow” drills with 3/4 speed when you no longer fumble, and only add the shot timer once you have had weeks of success without fumbles at 3/4th's speed.

Key:

Wall drills - are practicing your trigger press and sight alignment on a blank wall, this allows you 100% sight focus without worrying about dressing the sights up to a target, and thus it will build a good habit of indexing the sights and watching the sights for combative sighted fire.
CD’s - or “Contact Drill’s” are what most people call scanning and assessing
SHO - stands for “Support Hand Only” shooting.
FHO - stands for “Firing Hand Only” shooting

Again, no speed annotation (such as 3/4) means that you should be going slow enough to guarantee now fumbling.

Week - 1

Monday:
Randomly pick a basic routine card (or two if you are working 30 minutes).

Tuesday: (Presentations)
1. 5 minutes of *wall drills* from the ready, finish each with contact drills or “CD’s”
2. 5 minutes of wall drills from the weapons retention position, finish with CD’s
3. 5 minutes of wall drills from the holster, finish with CD’s
4. 5 minutes of wall drills from the ready SHO, finish with CD’s
5. 5 minutes of wall drills from the weapons retention FHO, finish with CD’s

6. 5 minutes of wall drills at 3/4 speed from the holster, finish with CD's

Wednesday: (Reloads)
1. 5 minutes of speed reloads SHO, finish with CD's
2. 5 minutes of empty gun reloads SHO, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of empty gun reloads FHO, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of speed reloads FHO, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of tactical reloads, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of empty gun reloads at 3/4 speed, finish with CD's

Thursday: Randomly pick a basic routine card (or two) OR select one random and choose one that you know you need work on

Friday: (Ambidextrous cover usage)
1. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from support side of low barricade, finish with CD's
2. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from support side of mid barricade, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from support side of high barricade, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from firing side of low barricade, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from firing side of mid barricade, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from firing side of high barricade, finish with CD's

Saturday or Sunday: Makeup for any day or skills missed, extra dry practice day for over-achievers. Under *no circumstance* should you practice 7 days a week.

Week - 2

Monday:
Randomly pick a basic routine card (or two if you are working 30 minutes).

Tuesday: (Presentations)
1. 5 minutes of dry practice (using a target) from the ready, finish each with contact drills or "CD's"
2. 5 minutes of dry practice from the weapons retention position, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of dry practice from the holster, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of dry practice from the ready SHO, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of dry practice from the weapons retention FHO, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of dry practice at 3/4 speed from the holster, finish with CD's

Wednesday: (Malfunction clearances)
1. 5 minutes of immediate action SHO, finish with CD's
2. 5 minutes of remedial action SHO, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of immediate action FHO, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of remedial action FHO, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of immediate action at 3/4 speed, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of remedial action at 3/4 speed, finish with CD's

Thursday: Randomly pick a basic routine card (or two) OR select one random and choose one that you know you need work on

Friday: (Ambidextrous and positional cover usage)
1. 5 minutes of moving to prone, shoot from support side of low barricade, finish with CD's
2. 5 minutes of moving to kneeling shoot from support side of mid barricade, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from support side of high barricade, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of moving to prone, shoot from firing side of low barricade, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of moving to kneeling, shoot from firing side of mid barricade, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from firing side of high barricade, finish with CD's

Saturday or Sunday: Makeup for any day or skills missed, extra dry practice day for over-achievers. Under *no circumstance* should you practice 7 days a week.

Week - 3

Monday:
Randomly pick a basic routine card (or two if you are working 30 minutes).

Tuesday: (Presentations and use airsoft or SIRT/laser device with designated target to see hits)
1. 5 minutes of dry practice from the ready SHO, finish each with contact drills or "CD's"
2. 5 minutes of dry practice from the weapons retention position SHO, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of dry practice from the holster SHO, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of dry practice from the ready FHO, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of wall drills from the weapons retention FHO, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of wall drills at 3/4 speed dry practice (your real firearm, and weighted dry practice magazine) from the holster, finish with CD's

Wednesday: (Reloads)
1. 5 minutes of speed reloads SHO, finish with CD's
2. 5 minutes of empty gun reloads SHO, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of empty gun reloads FHO, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of speed reloads FHO, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of tactical reloads, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of empty gun reloads at 3/4 speed, finish with CD's

Thursday: Randomly pick a basic routine card (or two) OR select one random and choose one that you know you need work on

Friday: (Ambidextrous cover usage, integrate proper tactical light usage)
1. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from support side of low barricade, finish with CD's
2. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from support side of mid barricade, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from support side of high barricade, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from firing side of low barricade, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from firing side of mid barricade, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from firing side of high barricade, finish with CD's

Saturday or Sunday: Makeup for any day or skills missed, extra dry practice day for over-achievers. Under *no circumstance* should you practice 7 days a week.

Week - 4

Monday:
Randomly pick a basic routine card (or two if you are working 30 minutes).

Tuesday: (Presentations use tactical light and airsoft or SIRT/laser device with designated target to see hits)
1. 5 minutes of dry practice (using a target) from the ready, finish each with contact drills or "CD's"
2. 5 minutes of dry practice from the weapons retention position, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of dry practice from the holster, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of dry practice from the ready SHO, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of dry practice from the weapons retention FHO, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of dry practice at 3/4 speed from the holster, finish with CD's

Wednesday: (Malfunction clearances and now dry practice a shot after every 3 or fourth dry practice)
1. 5 minutes of immediate action SHO, finish with CD's
2. 5 minutes of remedial action SHO, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of immediate action FHO, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of remedial action FHO, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of immediate action at 3/4 speed, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of remedial action at 3/4 speed, finish with CD's

Thursday: Randomly pick a basic routine card (or two) OR select one random and choose one that you know you need work on

Friday: (Ambidextrous and positional cover usage, add tactical flashlight manipulation to all parts of the drill where practical)
1. 5 minutes of moving to prone, shoot from support side of low barricade, finish with CD's
2. 5 minutes of moving to kneeling shoot from support side of mid barricade, finish with CD's
3. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from support side of high barricade, finish with CD's
4. 5 minutes of moving to prone, shoot from firing side of low barricade, finish with CD's
5. 5 minutes of moving to kneeling, shoot from firing side of mid barricade, finish with CD's
6. 5 minutes of moving to and shoot from firing side of high barricade, finish with CD's

Saturday or Sunday: Makeup for any day or skills missed, extra dry practice day for over-achievers. Under *no circumstance* should you practice 7 days a week.

Concluding Your Dry Practice
To conclude your dry practice session it is PARAMOUNT that you end your dry practice session with proper safety rituals as well:

1. Once you have completed your last dry practice drill, you must mentally leave the dry practice session just as surly as you entered it; deliberately and fully cognizant of what you are doing.
    a. Say aloud: "*I have completed this dry practice session and my dry practice is over.*"
        i. Do NOT, for any reason, allow yourself to think or say anything like "Just one more time/presentation/draw" etc. You have made the statement that the dry practice is over, so it's over and it's time to wrap it up.
    b. Immediately face in a safe direction and properly unload any NLTF and stow them along with any NLTF or weighted magazines in your designated dry practice range bag.
    c. Immediately take down and store your dry practice targets.
    d. Remove your shot timer, turn it off, and stow it.
    e. Remove your safety equipment and stow it.
    f. Seal the dry practice range bag with all of your dry practice tools.
    g. Securely stow your dry practice range bag
2. With the fact that you have completed your dry practice session at the forefront of your mind, you can now recover your designated live fire range bag and either store your firearm and other equipment (like your shot timer) or place it in the condition that you desire it to be in. If you decide to carry hot (loading your firearm with live rounds), ensure that you:
    a. You are fully cognizant that your dry practice is over and that you are in fact going hot.
    b. Load in a safe direction and safely holster

Taking Care of Your Equipment

A Few Pointers to Make Your Plastic BB Catchers Last Longer

- For combative shooters - don't worry about an aiming point. Turn any printed target around and shoot at a clean, unprinted surface, and use the whole target to aid you in achieving a hand-span group.
- Wash target faces as directed by the manufacturer; do not use abrasives or washcloths.
- Don't upgrade your electronic rifles or shotguns to a higher pressure setting, and keep at distance of no less than seven yards (for rifles) or you risk "pitting" and destroying your target's surface.

In conclusion, you now have all the basic tools you need to plan your course of action to better train yourself to win the fight of your life.

This article was not written to be a comprehensive guide to dry practice, it has simply been written to put a few good ideas and solid principles into format that would quickly lay a solid foundation for further education and training. I HIGHLY encourage you to continue to seek a deeper understanding of what you are doing.

Ask if You Don't Know or are Unsure

If our above guidelines are at all confusing, or not clear to you for any reason, please feel free to contact us for clarification BEFORE you begin your dry practice session at strategist@pulsefirearmstraining.com

I have given you these valuable training tips and other proven concepts so that you can quickly begin to develop the correct techniques during your limited training time and to help you maximize your personal training time in order to rapidly achieve any goal you set your mind to. The concept of quickly building solid skills is of the utmost importance because - as is often lamented - mastering any new skill will take years and years of training and practice, and that's true, for those things that hold value, do indeed come at a cost.

If you are an aspiring instructor, please come to understand the ideas herein contained, (as is everything we do at every level) revolves around our perfecting the ideas contained in this article. The ideas and principles are not gospel and dogma, they can be changed, they can be modified, but you will have to present well-reasoned arguments instead of institutional dogma, we need the WHY. We will listen, because just like our clients, we want to increase our survivability as well and teach what works, not traditions.

Finally, as an instructor or a student, if you have found a better way to do something, or have a inventive technique, please don't keep it to yourself. Share it with us, and we will in turn share it as well, and like steel on steel, it will make all of us better.

As usual, if you have questions, feel free to contact us.

Until next time, stay frosty.

- Silent Bob

About Ron Danielowski

Ron Danielowski is the Chief Instructor and a founder of Pulse O2DA Firearms Training Inc. Ron has 25 years experience training thousands of civilians, soldiers, sailors, Marines, and law enforcement officers. As a multi-agency accredited instructor, he has organized, developed, implemented, and overseen training for numerous federal agencies such as the Department of Energy, Federal Air Marshals, and the Department of State. He has worked extensively in both Afghanistan and Iraq in support of America's military and federal agencies. Ron started his instructing career in the Marine Corps, both as a coach and a Primary Marksmanship Instructor. Ron is a Distinguished Marksman, member of the "President's Hundred" winner of the Marine Infantry Team Trophy Match, and numerous other awards for shooting excellence. Ron has worked with some of the finest operators and combative instructors in the world, and it is his experience that provides the foundation for the Pulse O2DA training process. Ron can be reached at silentbob@pulsefirearmstraining.com, followed at Twitter "silent__bob" (double underscore), or feel free to like us at Pulse O2DA on Facebook.

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Dry Practice Checklist

Safety Rituals

Once you have entered your established dry practice area, and before your begin your dry practice session:

- Face in a safe direction and unload your firearm correctly.
- Place any loose rounds and any filled magazines into your designated live fire range bag.
- Check your ammunition carriers (pouches etc.,) and ensure there is no live ammunition in them, if you find live ammunition place it in the designate live fire range bag.
- Check yourself - your pockets and any other place on your body that you might place ammunition, if you find live ammunition place it in your designate live fire range bag.
- Now thoroughly inspect and sanitize your dry practice area, ensuring that there are no live rounds that could accidentally be picked up.
    - In this sanitization sweep you are looking for any loose ammunition that could be laying around or unintentionally stored and accessed during your dry practice session. If you find any, place it in your designated live fire range bag.
- Once you have sanitized yourself and your dry practice area, place your designated live fire range bag, - and all live ammunition - in a safe and secure area that neither you nor any unauthorized personnel can access it until the time you want to retrieve it (after dry practice only).
- Once you have removed your live fire range bag and stored it elsewhere, you can now retrieve and open your dry practice range bag.
- You can now begin your dry practice session with a proper Chamber Check and Magazine Check to ensure that you are indeed unloaded.

Be “All There”

- Wherever and whenever you choose to conduct your dry practice, be “all there”. Never allow your mind to wander from the task at hand. If your mind is wandering, immediately stop your dry practice.
- Avoid all the distractions you can, so plan ahead and let others know that your training time is sacrosanct to you.
    - If you do experience any distraction, such as a phone call, a knock at the door, etc. IMMEDIATELY stop your dry practice and deal with the issue to the point that you can mentally get back into your dry practice (don’t bring your issues back to practice with you), if you can’t - wrap your dry practice session up and shut it down.
    - If you decide to continue your dry practice session after an interruption, you must return to step four (see below) and proceed through all of the sequential steps.

- When dry practicing you should set a reasonable time limit for each session. Practice no less than 15 minutes a day and no more than 30 minutes per weapons system. Practicing a half an hour five times a week is much better than two and a half hours practice secession once a week.
- In order to benefit fully from your dry practice, practice no less than 4 days per week and no more than 6 days per week.

APPLY The Four Safety Habits - Always

I. Keep my finger straight and off the trigger until I'm intentionally firing
II. Control and know where the muzzle is pointing
III. Know the condition of the firearm
IV. Be sure of my target and my environment

Furthermore, if you are truly all there and fully engaged, this means that:

- You should be using your eye protection, ESPECIALLY if you are using airsoft or other NLTF or such firearms simulating and projectile firing devices such as Simunitions® or UTM.®

Now follow your training plan and goals, be all there and put your all into it.

Concluding Your Dry Practice

To conclude your dry practice session it is PARAMOUNT that you end your dry practice session with proper safety rituals as well:

- Once you have completed your last dry practice drill, you must mentally leave the dry practice session just as surly as you entered it, deliberately and fully cognizant of what you are doing.
- Say aloud: "I have completed this dry practice session and my dry practice is over."
    - Do NOT, for any reason, allow yourself to think or say anything like "Just one more time/presentation/draw" etc. You have made the statement that the dry practice is over, so it's over and it's time to wrap it up.
- Immediately face in a safe direction and properly unload any NLTF and stow them along with any NLTF or weighted magazines in your designated dry practice range bag.
- Immediately take down and store your dry practice targets.
- Remove your shot timer turn it off and stow it.
- Remove your safety equipment and stow it.
- Seal the dry practice range bag with all of your dry practice tools.
- Securely stow your dry practice range bag

With the fact that you have completed your dry practice session at the forefront of your mind, you can now recover your designated live fire range bag and either store your firearm and other equipment (like your shot timer) or place it in the condition that you desire it to be in. If you decide to carry hot, ensure that you:

a. You are fully cognizant that your dry practice is over and that you are in

fact going hot.

b. Load in a safe direction and safely holster